

Fisheries (\$92,029,000)

(Dollars in Thousands)

Fisheries		2001 Enacted	Uncontrol. & Related Changes (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)	2002 Budget Request	Change From 2001 (+/-)
Hatchery Operations and Maintenance	\$(000) FTE	52,008 461	+1,006 -	-3,652 +4	49,362 465	-2,646 +4
Fish and Wildlife Management	\$(000) FTE	40,021 252	+595 -	+3,001 9	43,617 261	+3,596 +9
CAM See General Business Operation Expenses.		[2,267]	-	-	[2,267]	-
Total	\$(000) FTE	92,029 713	+1,601 -	-651 +13	92,979 726	+950 +13

Overview

The Service's Fisheries program includes the world's most extensive system of hatcheries for recovery of threatened and endangered species, restoration of depleted fish stocks, enhancing sport fish populations, and mitigating to offset the deleterious effects of federal water projects.

The Fisheries program safeguards fishery resources worth billions of dollars, rescues troubled aquatic species on the brink of extinction, and helps provide recreational opportunities for the Nation's 50 million licensed anglers. FWS's 70 National Fish Hatcheries produce more than 148 million fish in

FY2000, including striped bass, steelhead, lake trout and salmon. FWS's 64 management offices assist states, tribes, other federal agencies, and local governments with aquatic habitat restoration, species recovery and enhancement, marine mammals, and invasive species.

The official number of National Fish Hatcheries changed from 66 to 70 this year due to the counting of fully functional sub-stations which share administration with other hatcheries.

As a leader in fisheries science since 1871, the Service conducts fishery management, fish propagation, habitat restoration, fish health, species recovery, and technical support functions in pursuit of its mission to conserve, protect, and enhance fish and wildlife and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. In cooperation with fisheries stakeholders, and consistent with legislative authority, the Service established six priorities to guide present and future activities and programs for fisheries and aquatic resources. These priorities are displayed in the following table:

The Six Fisheries Priorities

- Recover listed and candidate aquatic species
- Restore interjurisdictional fisheries and aquatic ecosystems
- Manage interjurisdictional fisheries
- Fulfill mitigation obligations
- Restore depleted aquatic populations to preclude listing
- Provide fish and wildlife management assistance to tribes and on Fish and Wildlife Service lands

The Fisheries Program uses its broad expertise to effectively manage resources to meet these priorities. In recent years, the Service has integrated the work of National Fish Hatcheries (NFHs) and Fish and Wildlife Management Assistance field stations (FROs or FWMAOs) to help restore lake trout, Atlantic salmon, striped bass, Pacific salmon, steelhead trout, and other interjurisdictional and trust species. During FY 2000, the Fisheries Program used the combined scientific and management capabilities of 70 NFHs, 64 FROs, nine Fish Health Centers, and seven Fish Technology Centers to help manage, restore and recover aquatic species and ecosystems that form the cultural and economic core of communities from the Yukon River in Alaska to the Florida Everglades.

The Fisheries Program continually develops and applies sound science and technologies, and improves the management systems to identify the highest priority fisheries needs of the Nation. This allows the Fisheries Program to lead and complement the fisheries management actions of state, tribal, and local entities; aid in restoration projects on private lands; and fulfill the Service's restoration, recovery and mitigation goals. All levels of the Fisheries Program have increased efforts to enhance its effectiveness and efficiency through the application of improved science, technology and information management.

FY 2001 and FY 2002 will be critically important to the Fisheries Program and overall success of Service activities to conserve aquatic resources. The Program is preparing separate but integrated strategic plans for the Fisheries Program as a whole and for the National Fish Hatchery System. The plans, which are anticipated to be completed by July 2001, will be the first steps in the Fisheries Program's commitment to using a comprehensive planning system to govern its priorities and activities. These plans will establish a unified vision and identify specific actions that will be taken to achieve that vision over the next five years, as well as timetables and evaluation standards to be used in promoting and measuring progress. Each Region and each Fisheries Program field station will step-down the National strategic plans and employ them in their day-to-day decisions and activities. This will help integrate and unify the Program's activities and will ensure those activities are relevant to fishery management programs of states, tribes, other federal agencies, and conservation organizations.

Science-Based Management

The Service is a science-based agency, governed by the natural laws under which fish and wildlife exist. The Fisheries Program has always strived to use the best available science in fisheries management, restoration and recovery activities, and propagation programs. The Service has been a leader in the development of new knowledge on population dynamics, genetics, and fish health as well as new technologies to improve hatchery programs.

Science-Based Management Areas

- Conducting Wild Fish Health Surveys.
- Documenting the abundance and distribution of fish pathogens and diseases in wild fish. Using state-of-the-art technologies to help conserve and restore Pacific salmon, Atlantic salmon, striped bass, native trout and sturgeon species.
- Working with Investigative New Animal Drugs to facilitate the propagation of healthy fish.
- Development of refugia and rearing techniques to aid in the recovery of endangered species.
- Developing GIS databases to identify crucial habitats and barriers to fish passage.
- Analyzing genetics to provide the Service and its partners with tools for successful conservation and management.

Fisheries Operational Needs System

The Fisheries Program developed a national database to plan, budget, and communicate priority aquatic resource conservation projects and associated funding and staffing needs similar to the Refuge Operational Needs System. The needs originate at the field level, and focus on achievement of natural resource outcomes. The FONS database represents a step forward in the efficient planning and prioritization of Fisheries programs. During FY 1999 and 2000, FROs, NFHS, Fish Health Centers, and Fish Technology Centers entered over 900 projects into FONS, totaling more than \$100 million in optimal needs. The Fisheries Program updates FONS yearly and is using the data in conjunction with the results of the 3A's analysis (discussed below), the fish passage database, and stakeholder input to direct the Program toward the most urgent projects supporting the six Fisheries Priorities, with a focus on restoration and recovery of native species.

The National Fish Hatchery System - Alignment With the Future of Fisheries Management

The NFHS produces and distributes a variety of fish species for recovery of threatened and endangered species, mitigation for federal water development actions, restoration of depleted stocks, and fulfillment of tribal trust responsibilities. The NFHS is focusing its hatchery programs on restoration and recovery goals, ensuring that propagation programs contribute to ecosystem stability and improving the health of hatchery fish.

Several major actions to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the NFHS in conserving aquatic resources are nearing completion. In FY 1998, the Service initiated its Alignment, Appropriateness, and Adequacy (3A's) Evaluation and database to ensure fish production programs are aligned with Service priorities; appropriate for fishery management objectives; and adequately supported by proper scientific planning, monitoring and evaluation. Results of the Alignment analysis showed that among 779 different fish production programs, 87% of the programs and 96% of the fish by weight were directly aligned with the Fisheries Priorities. Forty percent of the unaligned programs were discontinued. The remainder consist primarily of small community fishing events for National Fishing Week and Boy Scout jamborees, and reimbursed

programs for the military under the Sikes Act. Appropriateness and Adequacy analyses are underway, and will be completed in July 2001.

The NFHS developed and implemented a new coding system to classify fish and fish egg distribution in 2000, in a response to the General Accounting Office (GAO) Phase 1 Audit on hatchery operations. In its Phase 2 Audit, GAO recommended that Congress(1) provide direction on which programs it wants the hatcheries to emphasize, and (2) provide the Service with clear authority to seek reimbursement from federal water development agencies and/or project beneficiaries for all associated hatchery operation and maintenance expenses.

Finally, the NFHS engaged the Sport Fishing and Boating Partnership Council (SFBPC) to conduct a thorough review of its hatchery operations. The SFBPC completed its final report: *"Saving a System in Peril"* in September 2000. In addition to this external evaluation, the Service conducted evaluations through eight internal work groups that have provided reports and policy recommendations in the areas of good science, authorizations, a Fishery Operational Needs System (FONS), reimbursable activities, conservation exchanges, outreach, tribal trust responsibilities, and the 3A's analysis. All of these perspectives will be reflected in ongoing Service efforts to develop a strategic plan for the NFHS. This plan will be critically important in focusing, redirecting and modernizing the National Fish Hatchery System. It will provide a framework to guide the Hatchery System and its relationships with states, tribes, other federal agencies, industry, conservation organizations and the public. The plan will be stepped-down to the regions, then stepped-down further to hatcheries, fish health centers, and fish technology centers. These plans will provide a framework for unifying the Hatchery Program and also for evaluating its accomplishments and the efficiency and effectiveness of its operations.

Fish and Wildlife Management - Restoring the Health of Aquatic Ecosystems

The Fish and Wildlife Management (FWM) program evaluates fish populations and their habitats and manages the restoration and recovery of aquatic populations, habitats, and ecosystems. Fishery Resource Offices achieve resource goals through on-the-ground work and by providing technical and management assistance to partners, both inside and outside the Service. The FWM program often works in tandem with other public and private entities to address the strongest threats to aquatic ecosystem health. This includes the FWM Marine Mammals Program's work towards sustaining marine mammal populations for which the Service has jurisdiction. The long-term health and stability of these populations ensures a traditional subsistence lifestyle for Alaska Natives. The FWM's work benefits species listed as threatened or endangered under the *Endangered Species Act* or helps to control declining population trends, precluding the need for listing.

In recent years, FWM has expanded efforts aimed at the two leading causes of species endangerment: habitat loss and invasive species. The FWM program pioneered the Service's fish passage program to begin removal of 2.5 million obstructions that block or impede fish passage to their historic habitats. FWM works with state, local, tribal, and private partners to complete such habitat restoration projects. Since 1998, the fish passage program has reopened nearly 3,000 miles of spawning and nursery areas, and restored over 300 miles of instream and stream bank habitat. To combat invasive species the FWM program provides Service leadership to the President's Invasive Species Council and, with a network of on-the-ground coordinators across the country, administers efforts to prevent and control the spread of nonindigenous aquatic invasive species.

While the FWM Program accelerates its efforts to combat the two primary causes of species endangerment, the Program is always cognizant that populations will not rebound without the careful construction, implementation, and monitoring of comprehensive management plans. Across the country, from the Down East Rivers of Maine to California's Trinity River, FWM restores and conserves interjurisdictional fish stocks with partners. These coordinated, adaptive management efforts help to keep aquatic species off the endangered species list; revitalize and maintain commercial, sport, subsistence and tribal fisheries; and support healthy aquatic ecosystems.

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